

The Sheaf

St. Joseph's Young Priests Society
A Lay Organisation Fostering Vocations



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OFFICE: 23 MERRION SQUARE, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND, D02 XE02. ✉ TELEPHONE: +353 (1) 676 2593 ✉ EMAIL: editor@sjyps.ie ✉ SPRING 2024

PRAYER – THE LISTENING EAR OF THE HEART

The theme that the Society has chosen for this coming year is Prayer – The listening ear of the heart. That is probably no surprise. After all, it is one of the main aims of our Society: to pray for more vocations to priesthood and religious life.

There is something of additional interest this year. From Good Shepherd Sunday 2023-24, it is a special year dedicated to praying for and promoting awareness of Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood in Ireland. The specific theme is: "Take the Risk for Christ". Many events have been organised by the National Vocations office in Maynooth each month, to promote awareness of vocations to priesthood. This includes Masses on television, at Knock Shrine and Lough Derg. A number of dioceses and parishes are organising their own prayer Novenas, Rosaries and Eucharistic Adoration. Many prayers are also offered by branches and individuals.

Importantly, Pope Francis has dedicated 2024, as a year of prayer and reflection on the documents of Vatican II, in preparation for the Church Jubilee Year in 2025. Dioceses are invited to promote initiatives to remind people of the centrality of both individual prayer and community prayer.

In this year of preparation, Pope Francis sets a tone for our attitude towards prayer when he said, "From now on I am happy to think that the year preceding the Jubilee event, 2024, will be dedicated to a great 'symphony' of prayer. First of all, to recover the desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and adore him."

The Dicastery for Evangelisation has made some useful resources available to help people to better understand and rediscover the value of prayer (iubilaeum2025.va/en.html). In addition to the 38 catecheses on Prayer that Pope Francis himself presented from 6 May 2020 to 16 June 2021, a series of booklets entitled, "Notes on Prayer" are being published by the Vatican publishing house, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. The eight titles are designed to put the need for a profound relationship with the Lord back at the centre of people's lives, through the many forms of prayer to be found in the rich Catholic tradition of prayer. In addition, a pastoral aid is available online, in a digital version, to help parish communities, families, priests, cloistered nuns and young people to become more aware of the need for daily prayer.

In our world today, we are well aware of the many challenges that have to be faced and overcome by individuals as well as nations. These include conflicts and wars, environmental issues, immigration, tragedies of road deaths, debates on referendums, inflation, housing, challenges around equality, diversity and

inclusion. There are also perceived challenges in terms of vocations, the celebration of the sacraments, lower Mass attendance and Synodality. We need to discover new ways to bring the Good News of Salvation to coming generations, to find new ways using modern means, to spread God's love to a world that often seems indifferent. However, challenges also bring opportunities and Christ has said that he will not abandon us or leave us orphaned (Jn 14:18-26). This gives us hope and confidence that we are never alone even in the midst of what can seem to be the most dark and terrible of situations. When we reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we learn from Him that nothing worthwhile comes without sacrifice, perseverance and endurance. When we reach out in prayer, we find the strength, support and joy, to continue giving glory to God, the God who made us and who loves us.

The heart of our relationship with God is prayer which is the cornerstone of our spiritual life each day, but particularly during the Lenten season where we try to focus on Prayer plus Fasting and Almsgiving. Prayer is dialogue with God and helps to open our hearts to Him, seeking his guidance and grace. Prayer during Lent gives us an opportunity for introspection and contemplation, allowing us to examine our lives in the light of God's word and love. It is a time for us to deepen our understanding of the sacrifice of Christ and to align our wills more closely with God's will. Prayer strengthens our faith, nourishes our souls and prepares us to face the challenges of life with a renewed spirit.

I would like to share a reflection on Prayer from the Office of Readings during Lent. Prayer is the light of the soul and a mediator between God and man. Prayer lifts the soul into the heavens, where it hugs God in an indescribable embrace.

Prayer is a go-between linking us to God. It gives joy to the soul and calms its emotions, but do not imagine that prayer is simply words. Prayer is the desire for God, an indescribable devotion, given to us but brought about by God's grace. As St. Paul says: "For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf in a way that could never be put into words."

If God gives to someone the gift of prayer, it is a gift of imperishable riches - heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. Whoever tastes that food catches fire and their soul burns forever with desire for the Lord.

Wishing every blessing for the year ahead,
Fr. Séamus McEntee, Chief Chaplain



Pray Also for Your Priests

Pope Francis – Wednesday Audience, 17 June 2020
'I encourage you to pray for priests' he said. 'For your parish priest, for those who are close to you so that through your prayer, the Lord strengthens them in their vocation and comforts them in their ministry and that they may always be ministers of the Joy of the Gospel, for all people.'



New Books for 2023/2024

Defending Hope, *Dispatches from the front lines in Palestine and Israel*, edited by Eoin Murray and James Mehigan. (Introduction by Nobel Peace Laureate, Mairead Maguire). (ISBN: 9781847308337).

The Word is Near You on Your Lips and in Your Heart, *Reflections on the Weekday Readings for The Liturgical Year 2023-2024*, Fr Martin Hogan. (ISBN: 9781788126472).

The Irish Get Up and Go Inspirational Diary 2024. Product Code: 9781910921838. *The diary that inspires and motivates.*

Get Up and Go Daily Guide to Wellbeing 2024. Product Code: 9781910921876

Get Up and Go Gratitude Journal. Product Code: 9781910921258.

Sacred Space, The Prayerbook 2024. Product Code: 9781788126403

Living Prayer 2024, *Featuring commentaries on the Pope's Intentions by Patrick Carberry SJ, the Liturgical Calendar and photographs of Holy Sites.*

Product Code: 544197.

2024 Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons and Weekdays
The Almanac for Pastoral Liturgy.
Product Code: 978-1-61671-707-0.

The Catholic Handbook for Visiting the Sick and Homebound 2024.
Product Code: 9781616717094.

Gratias, *A Little Book of Gratitude*, John Quinn.
Product Code: 9781847308603

A Traveller Passing Through, *Reflections from The Holy Land*, Ruth Patterson.
Product Code: 9781800970168.

The Great Dreamer, *the Life and Mission of St. Francis Xavier*, Brendan Comerford SJ. Product Code: 9781788126632.

Grit, *The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth.
Product Code: 9781501111112.

Sacred Rituals, *A Simple Book of Everyday Prayer*, Noirin Ni Riain.
Product Code: 9781399729475.

Becoming Human, Becoming Devine, *The Christian Life According to Blessed Columba Marmion*, Columba McCann OSB.
Product Code: 9781800970441.

The Miraculous Medal, Pendant of Power, Christine Watkins.
Product Code: 9781947701212.

Christ's Seven Words from the Cross, *Foreword by Bishop Andrew Forster and Bishop Donal McKeown*, John Mann. Product Code: 9781788126755.

Rekindling the Flame, *a Pilgrimage in the Footsteps of Brigid of Kildare*, *New Edition Revised by Rita Minehan CSB*.
Product Code: 9781739145507.

Two Lives of Saint Brigid, *edited and translated by Philip Freeman*.
Product Code: 978-1-80151-116-2.

Presentation of Benemerenti Medals

Magheradroll Parish had a special day of celebration on 20 August 2023, to mark the presentation of the Benemerenti Papal awards by Archbishop Eamon Martin, to Catherine (Kathleen) McEvoy and Monica McGoran. Catherine was nominated for

this Papal medal for services to St. Joseph's Young Priests Society for over 40 years and Monica for serving the Parish as organist and choir mistress for over 40 years.



Fr Brian Brown PP Magheradroll Parish, Catherine McEvoy, Tony Melia National Vice President and Sr Margaret Rose former Dromore Diocesan Secretary.



Catherine McEvoy; Arch-Bishop, Eamon Martin; Monica McGoran and Fr Brian Brown PP.

A Meditation on Priesthood – 25 Years On – *Fr Billy Swan ADM*

Last June, I celebrated my Silver Jubilee of ordination to the priesthood. It was a moment of gratitude to God for his goodness to me and for the privilege of serving Him and his people for the past 25 years, as a priest. The words of the hymn 'Amazing Grace' came to mind as I looked back on the past, but also looked towards the future with hope: "His grace that brought me safe thus far; And grace will lead me home". A brother priest wisely reminded me, that a jubilee celebration is more about God persevering with us than it is about we persevering with Him and the mission he has entrusted to us. I felt the truth of this in my bones as I reached this important milestone. By God's grace and mercy, I have come this far.

In those 25 years, much has changed in Ireland and in the Church. Yet much of what it means to be a priest remains as it ever was – to serve and to lead; to be committed to pastoral charity, configured to Christ the Head and Chief Shepherd of his Church; to minister the sacraments in the person of Christ and his Church; to preach and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles; to pray with God's priestly people and intercede before God for them; to care for his people and encourage them, especially the sick, the poor and wounded; to work together with our bishops, fellow priests and the whole people of God to witness to the Gospel and model a more humane and wholesome way of life. All of this, while knowing that we carry a treasure in the clay of our own fragile humanity.

But we know that this is also a time of great change. Since 1998, there has been a shift in how we priests understand our mission and how we do things. One way of describing this change is that today, priestly ministry is understood more in relation to the priesthood of all the baptised. The ordained priesthood is radically at the service of the priesthood of all the faithful. In other words, the essential nature of ordained ministry is directed to the flourishing of the vocation of all God's people. In this light, my vocation as a priest is to help the baptised to be priests, prophets and kings; to encourage them to be witnesses in the world; to be salt and light as missionary disciples of Christ. I believe that the more priests help to deepen the vocation of everyone in the Church community, the more what is proper to priestly ministry, will stand out.

Back in 1998, there was more emphasis on what the priest does by himself or with other priests. Now, there is a greater awareness of his communion with the whole Church. Therefore, rather than priestly ministry taking place in isolation or apart from others, now it is rightly situated in close proximity to the lay vocation and lay ministry. In this renewed understanding, the ordained priesthood is not just about us praying but about teaching others how to pray; it's not just about preaching and teaching the faith but raising up a whole army with the confidence to do this as well. If one person holds a bag of seed and sows those seeds, that's good. But if the same person puts a bag of seeds into the hands of a whole community, then the harvest is multiplied. And this is why I am hopeful for the future, as we slowly transition from a clerical Church to a synodal Church and walk more closely together along the pathway that leads to the house of the Father. There is an opportunity now for us to become a more vibrant Church of communion, participation and mission. This is the Church of the future in which the leadership, courage and faith of priests will be needed more than ever.

I thank God for being happy as a priest over the last 25 years. I believe the greatest witness a priest can give is to be happy – happy and joyful in the service of the Lord and his people. I am so grateful to all the good people who supported me over the last quarter of a century, not least my family, friends, fellow priests and all the great people involved in St Joseph's Young Priests Society. I would like to conclude with the words of St Patrick who looked back on the journey of his life and made the following prayer of thanksgiving. For me, it captures my feeling of gratitude as I celebrated my Silver Jubilee:

"I thank my God without ceasing so that today I can offer a sacrifice to him with confidence... Today I constantly praise and glorify your name wherever I may be among the nations, both in my successes and my difficulties. Whatever happens to me - good or ill, I pray to accept with an even temper and always give thanks to God who has shown me that I can trust him without limit or doubt" (Confessio34).

Fr Billy Swan ADM, Wexford.

Dates for Your Diary 2024

Sunday, 21st April - Vocations Sunday - Day of Prayer for Vocations.

Wednesday, 1st May - Feast of St. Joseph the Worker*

Sunday, 19th May - Pentecost Sunday*

Monday, 24th June - Feast of St John The Baptist*

Saturday, 22nd June - Pilgrimage to Knock*

Sunday, 28 July - Pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island, Co. Wexford.

Sat/Sun, 10th & 11th August - National Congress.

Sunday, 6th Oct - Ballapousta, - Anniversary Mass to mark the death of Mrs Olivia Mary Taaffe.

Sunday, 24th November - Feast of Christ the King - Mass of Thanksgiving for the gift of Priesthood at St. Andrews Church, Westland Row, Dublin at 3.30 p.m.

NB: On the events marked* members can gain a Plenary Indulgence, subject to the usual conditions.

Study Theology Online at The Dominican Centre for Theological Studies, Tallaght Village, Dublin 24

The Priory Institute provides online Theology courses to degree level. Saturday lectures are available in Tallaght, or if you prefer, from the comfort of your own home. For further information visit www.prioryinstitute.com Email: enquiries@prioryinstitute.com

Last Will and Testament

Should you desire to include the Society in your legacy bequests, it is advisable to consult your solicitor when making or amending your Will.



Fr Frankline Nkopi and Fr Conrad Forzeh, two young priests from Cameroon, following their ordination to the priesthood on 6 September last, in their home Cathedral in the Diocese of Kumba. They have since commenced their Priestly duties in the Diocese of Elphin. Also included are Most Rev. Agapitus Nfon (Bishop of Kumba) and Most Rev. Kevin Doran (Bishop of Elphin).



A two day conference for Vocations Directors and seminarians, took place at Knock, on 7-8 March. The Dublin Vocations team, Fr. Seamus McEntee and Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy attended along with seminarian, Finn McDonnell. Please continue to pray that more men will discern the call to priesthood, especially during this year, which is dedicated to praying for diocesan priesthood. Pictured are Dublin Seminarian, Finn McDonnell, (1st year Philosophy in Maynooth); Cardinal Lazzaro You Heung-sik, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Clergy and Fr Seamus McEntee.



Pictured following his ordination by Bishop Donal McKeown, in St. Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, in July 2023, is Fr. Shaun Doherty, who celebrated his first Mass in St. Columb's Church, Waterside. Fr Shaun is pictured receiving a Stole from Derry Diocesan President, Christina McLaren, who presented it to him on behalf of The Society. Included in the picture are Society members Nora Canning and Celine McDaid. Photo: Courtesy of The Net, (Derry Diocesan newspaper).

A Prayer for Vocations

O Jesus, send labourers into your fields,
which are awaiting holy apostles,
saintly priests,
heroic missionaries and
dedicated sisters and brothers.
Enkindle in the hearts of men and
women, the spark of a vocation.
Grant that Christian families may
desire to give your church,
helpers in the work of tomorrow. Amen.

Recently Deceased and Acknowledgments

Abbeylea: Nora O'Donnell.

Ardfield / Rathbarry: James O'Leary, Anne Walsh, Tessie Hurley, Cornelius Scully, Mary O'Connor, Dan O'Connor, Eileen O'Leary,

Mary Hayes, Mrs. Connolly, Helen Santry, Anne Santry, Paddy Griffin, Bridie Clancy, Anita Murray, Martin Lahiff, JJ Harte, Eto McCarthy.

Armagh: Molly Lennon.

Ballinahinch / Killoscully: Elizabeth Gleeson, Maureen Quigley.

Ballymena - All Saints: John Downey.

Banbridge and Aghaderg: Mary Murray, Gerry O'Neill.

Blackpool: Sean Lucey.

Blackrock - Cork: Mary Griffin.

Bohermeen: Jane Boland, John Monaghan, Andy (Sonny) Bennett, Teddy Mallon, Jimmy Martin, Renee Henry, May Higgins,

Una Ward, Angie Rennicks, David McAteer, Michael Moriarty, Joseph O'Reilly, Naoise McManus, Fr. Sean Smith, Joe Costello, Brian Reilly.

Brackenstown: Liam Martin.

Caherdavin: Mrs Stasia Murray, Mrs Carol Fuller, Mrs Breda Flannery, Mrs Noreen Naughton, Frank McGovern.

Cashel: Joan Harty, Angela Fogarty.

Causeway: Dick Keane, Mai O'Connell.

Christ The King - Cork: Jo McCarthy.

Cleinish: Brendan Boyle, Mary Monaghan, Patrick (Paddy) McTeggart,

Mena Corrigan, Kathleen Sheerin, John Carson, Andrew Boyle, Pauline McGovern, Joe Walsh, Pat Gallagher, Tessie Greene, Bernadette Ferguson, Mairead O'Dolan, Mary Agnes Timoney, Catherine Noone, Kathleen Judge, Marie Corrigan, Eileen Maguire (nee McGovern), Jimmie Timoney, Dolores Daggitt, Imelda Leonard, Phil Maguire, Ann Gray, Mary Sheridan, Patsy and Hugh McManus, Josephine Corrigan.

Drogheda: Richard (Dick) Murphy, Anna Clarke, Sheila

Branigan, Brigid Josephine (Josie) McMonagle (nee McCabe), Margaret McCullough.

Dungannon: Sr. Marian Hagan.

Enniskillane: Nora Murphy, Mary McCaffrey.

Enniskillen: Eileen Tierney, Rosaleen Curran, Kevin Beattie, Rosaleen Corrigan, John Barron, Rita Swift,

Faughanvale (St Mary's): Teresa McCardle, Kathleen

Bryson, Jane McGuinness, Tommy Brown.

Foxrock: Patrick Dowling.

General: Most Rev. Liam MacDaid DD.

Irvinestown: Joseph McPike, Gabriel Murphy, Mary Mollan, Michael Boomer, Dermot Carney, Allan Rose, Rita McAleer, Liam Kane, Jim McDonagh, Lisa Nangle, Molly Corrigan, Josephs Tierney, Jack Cardwell, Doreen Maguire, Maura Green, Gerald Quinn, Margaret Maguire, George Love, Colm McGoldrick, Mollie McCusker.

Killaloe Diocesan Committee: Irene McNamara.

Killester : Mary B. Keane.

Knocknanny: Mary Brough, Evelyn Maguire, Mary McManus, Jim Gartland, Valerie McManus, Brian McBrien, Gerry McManus, Con McManus, Johnny McManus, Mary Baxter, Una Maguire, Maggie McCourt.

Leixlip: Enda Smith.

Lordship and Ballymascanlon: Eva Hamill, Lizzie Roddy, Marie Rice, Rose Keegan, Peadar Keegan, Teeny Rogan, Eileen O'Reilly, John O'Hanlon, Annie Sheelan, Maureen Rogers, Joe Erraught, Anne Rafferty, Mary Campbell, Patsy Treanor.

Limavady: Josephine Toner, Aileen Carmichael, Bridget Coyle.

Lurgan: Marie Maginn.

Maghera: Mary O'Kane, Nellie Glass, Peter Convery, Kathleen McFall, Rosemary Convery, Adam McFalcone, Ron Donnelly, Derek Schwendner, Kathleen Convery, Rita McGuckin, John Convery, Francis Donnelly, Francis Convery, Damian McErlean, Kate Bradley, Jim McKay, Barry Duffy, Gerard McErlean, Jimmy Norton, Maureen Young, Tony O'Kane, Mary Convery Jim Breen, Adrian Flanagan,

Rosella Crilly, Margaret Bradley, Jim Costello, Jimmy McCusker, Nan Higgins, Pat Convery, Connor Kerr, Patricia McGuckin, James Joseph Johnstone, Mary Brigid McKenna, Bridget McKay, Colm O'Doherty, Susan Dorrity, Liam Ledgewood, Martina Kelly, Fr. Seamus O'Connell, Eugene McRory, Cillian McKenna, Danny Otterson, Carmel Neeson, Joseph O'Kane, Mona Scott, Andy McGuckin.

Mountnugent / Ballinacree: Martina Cassells, Kevin Walsh, Mary Caffrey, Eileen Smyth, Anne Farnan, Martin Anderson, Joe Kevin, George McClarey, Eileen Murtagh, Tony Galea, Mattie Lynch, Kathleen Lynch, Cathal Burke.

Naas: Gretta McDonnell.

Newport: Peggy Kennedy.

Newry: Bernadette Farrell.

North Cathedral: George Feeney

Portadown: Moniene McCaffrey, Bob Wilson, Josie O'Neill, Ann Daly, Anthony Lawless, Mary Fearon, Madeleine O'Neill, Eithne McCreesh, Rita O'Reilly, Fr. Brian White, Ailish Fearnan, Seamus Litter.

Skibbereen: Danny O'Donovan, John Fitzgerald, Con Twohig, Martina O'Brien, James O'Neill.

Springfield - Tallaght*:** Margaret Furlong.

St. John the Baptist - Clontarf: Robert D'Arcy, Mary Beatrice May, Monica Cusack.

St. John Vianney, Ardlea: Anne Horan, Paddy Sheehan, Cláir Mhic Dhónaill.

St. Kevin's Harrington Street: Essie Aherne. Mary O'Shea.

St. Patrick's - Limerick: Michael Hayes.

Templemore: Kathleen McCarthy, Barry Morkan, Sr. Joan Kirby, Madge Kiely, Gus Ryan, Phyllis O'Toole, Mary O'Reilly, Teresa Maher, Marie Fogarty, Gobnait Enright.

Trillick: Conor McCaughey, Kevin McSorley, John McCaughey, Cathal McQuaid, Jack Harte, Cormac McCaughey, Laurence Quilty, Cassie Ann Gallagher, Brendan McCann, Charlie Keenan, Brendan McCann, Charlie Keenan, Eleanor Tunney, Eileen Monaghan, Michael Higgins, Michael McGirr, Fainche McAnespy, Benny McNabb.

If you would like a few copies of The Sheaf for your friends, please telephone the Office, tel: + 353 (1) 676 2593

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